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BULLETIN OF THE AMERICAN ART-UNION.



NEW-YORK, DECEMBER 1, 1851.

THE ILLUSTRATIONS.

The principal illustration of the present number is *The Warning*, designed and etched in outline, by DARLEY. This is the last of the series of four scenes from Cooper's novels, drawn expressly for the Bulletin by this accomplished artist. The first and third were taken from the *Prairie*, and the second from the *Pioneers*. The present sketch is an incident in *The Spy*. (chap. xxi.) It represents the scene in which Sergeant Hollister, Caesar, and Mrs. Flannagan, while drinking at the "Hotel Flannagan," are interrupted by Harvey Birch:

"It's a good soul that the Major is, anyway," returned the washerwoman, "and a kind soul, and a brave soul, too; and yeel say all that yeerself, Sergeant, I'm thinking." "For the matter of that, returned the veteran, there is one above even Washington to judge of souls; but this, I will say, that Major Dunwoodie is a gentleman who never says, Go, boys, but always says, Come, boys; and if a poor fellow is in want of a spur or martingale, and the leather-whack is gone, there is never wanting the real silver to make up the loss, and that from his own pocket, too."

"Why, then, are you here idle when all that he holds most dear are in danger?" cried a voice with startling abruptness; "mount, mount, and follow your Captain; arm and mount, and that instantly, or you will be too late."

"This unexpected interruption produced an instantaneous confusion among the tipplers. Caesar fled instinctively into the fire-place, where he maintained his position in defiance of a heat that would have roasted a white man. Sergeant Hollister turned promptly on his heel, and seizing his sabre, the steel was glittering by the fire-light, in the twinkling of an eye; but perceiving the intruder to be the pedler, who stood near the open door that led to the lean-to, in the rear, he began to fall back towards the position of the black, with a military intuition that taught him to concentrate his forces. Betty alone stood her ground, by the side of the temporary table. Replenishing the mug with a large addition of the article known to the soldiery by the name of 'choke-dog,' she held it towards the pedler."

The wood engraving in outline, was drawn on the wood by CHARLES C. GREENE, of Poughkeepsie, and engraved by BOBBETT & EDMONDS. It is an illustration of the following lines from the *Culprit Fay*:

"He has leaped the bog, he has pierced the brier,
He has swam the brook, and waded the mire,
Till his spirits sank and his limbs grew weak,
And the red waxed fainter on his cheek.
He had fallen to the ground outright,
For rugged and dim was his onward track;
But there came a spotted toad in sight,
And he laughed as he leaped upon her back."

The other illustration was drawn on the wood by BROWN and engraved by WHITNEY, after Mr.

EDMONDS's picture, "*What can a young lassie do wi' an auld man*," which is included in the Catalogue of the American Art-Union for the present year, being No. 205. The picture illustrates Burns's familiar ballad, of which we give three stanzas:

What can a young lassie, what shall a young lassie,
What can a young lassie do wi' an auld man?
Bad luck on the penny that tempted my minnie
To sell her poor Jenny for siller an' lan'!
Bad luck on the penny, &c.

He's always compleenin' frae mornin to e'enin,
He hosts and he hirples the weary day lang;
He's daylt and he's dozin, his bluid it is frozen,
O, dreary's the night wi' a crazy auld man!

Hehums and he hankers, he frets and he cankers,
I never can please him do a' that I can;
He's peevish and jealous of a' the young fellows:
O, dool on the day I met wi' an auld mau!

DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONALITY IN AMERICAN ART.

DISTINCTIVE character in our literature and art has been, to European critics, the subject of comment—pleasant and sarcastic—narrow and absurd; or, though more rarely, hopeful and prophetic. To the philosopher it is no puzzle. A national literature or art can only be the production of a marked, pervading trait of national character. When the American mind shall be fully developed, it will express itself in unmistakable characters. Nations, like individuals, toil in the morning, and when the heat of the day is past, comes the repose and the festivity—the garlanding and the gathering round to honor and listen to the aged. Hitherto has been our toil in the hard race for superiority, with nations older and wiser than we; and now, when our ships plough the seas, unrivalled; when our mechanics, our seamen, our agriculturists, have the rank they have struggled for, we can rest and breathe, and lighten the dulness of mere utility with poetry and song. One of the beautiful truths which Ruskin has thrown every where through his writings, is, that "we have to consider that the cornice as the close of the wall's life is of all features that which is best fitted for honor and ornament." So of the national edifice. Its foundations were laid in the morning twilight, with a thousand fears and anxieties, laid in the best blood and treasure of its builders. Its walls were built with the earnest haste of men who build to shelter themselves from the storm. What time was there to be happy in all this? But now, when the builders have reached the cornice—the crowning glory of the work—is the requirement made to develop the charms of the artistic ornament. It is our present object to point out, as far as we may, the character of ornament which shall best comport with that of the edifice, and how to attain it most directly. This is represented by the term, Nationality, or a "School."

That there exist the elements of distinctive greatness in the study of Art, is proved by many indications, some of which we shall here adduce, less to prove what few doubt, than to point out in which direction we ought to look for that light whose rising we all hope for. For these, we must study the indications of taste in those manufactures more or less remotely allied to the fine arts, being assured that if taste does appear in the former, it will be shown proportionably in the latter. The most valuable indications will, of course, be found in those branches in which the artist and the artisan are combined, as preëminently in ship-building. It is a gene-

rally acknowledged fact, that in beauty of form, the American ships are the first in the world. This is the more easily demonstrable, as the laws of structural beauty are dependent on a demand for a fitness to the use designed, as well as on abstract beauty of form. Thus, in the much debated question of the superiority, in this respect, of the Asia and Atlantic, there are three rules applicable, viz.: 1st. That in abstract lines, those are the most beautiful which approach nearest to the right line, still maintaining distinctly the character of a curve, or in technical phrase, the chastest. 2d. That right lines and angles indicate strength, and curved lines grace. 3d. That simplicity is an important component of beauty. The Atlantic's hull is built in accordance with all of those laws. The straight stern, delicate curvature of her lines, and exceeding simplicity, giving all the indications of strength, grace, and neatness.* I dwell on this point, 1st, because I wish to make it understood, that this is an index of the feeling of the nation; and this, because the development of these statements of beauty was instinctive, and because they are paralleled by all our manufactures; and, 2d, because the popular appreciation of them is so strong and universal; and, 3d, because having proved that this feeling does exist in the national character, we have proved that there exists the most important component of the artist mind; that which gave Raphael his grace, and Fra Angelico his purity, viz.: feeling for abstract beauty of form, alike in the hull of a ship and the human or other natural form. Of the cause of this development we may speak some other time; it is sufficient for the present to show that there is such a taste; and it is but to be directed into the proper channels, to produce the results we hope for. There is no such thing as bad taste; there may be undeveloped or rude taste, but we speak incorrectly when we speak of it as bad. If taste be, as it is defined, the power of receiving pleasure from external objects, it will be at once seen, that though the human mind may take a greater pleasure in that in which beauty is partially developed, than in the perfections of nature, we cannot call that bad or false taste which does not take pleasure in objects according to their ugliness. But there is no mind so constructed. Is not this evident? Then is it equally evident that where there is a preference, it lacks but cultivation to direct aright and produce a taste, more or less refined, according to the native capacity and purity of the mind.

Having proved the existence of taste, we have inferred that of talent: the former is the forerunner of the latter.

Let us examine, before we go further, into the desirability of this quality which we have called Nationality. We have defined it as the attainment to a School, or a distinctive manner of thinking upon, or regarding the subjects of art, corresponding to some trait of the national mind. It is desirable then:

1st. Because it is necessary to a popular appreciation of, and sympathy with Art, without which, its great function—its humanizing and

* If the reader has Ruskin's "Stones of Venice," he will find in a plate (VII) of the most beautiful natural lines, a very close approximation to the Atlantic's water-line, in the inner curve of the alisma plantago leaf.

refining influence—is lost, in a measure. Not that the artist must aim only to reach the multitude; but he should especially address himself to the expression of those feelings which he possesses in common with them. Let him be the leader of the taste of a nation, if he will, but to be so, he must lead where they can see, so far as they can see at all, that they are right, and thus winning their confidence, he will keep their reverence wherever he may wander. It is said that the many are always wrong, and so far as the determining the comparative merits of painters, or of truths, it is true; but true only, because they set no value on the things they do not comprehend. So far as they go they are right: the instincts of mankind are more to be relied on than the fine-spun theories of the schools, especially in such a country as this, where education and free thought are universal. The Greeks were accustomed to expose their works to the criticisms of the populace. *They* wrought out that nationality, and the people became a nation of art-lovers. That artist who has enlisted the enthusiasm of the people, has established his rank beyond all influence of critics. This enthusiasm, then, increases both public taste and artistic influence.

2d. It becomes a record of the progress of humanity and the race. Thus are marked indelibly the characteristics of the world, age by age; and we read on that mighty page, the progress of civilization—the movings of the spirit that animated the nations in the course of empire. The reader will find this point treated of in Ruskin's pamphlet on Pre-Raphaelitism, and Emerson's essay on Art. But Emerson is wrong in that he makes this the great mission of Art. The wave that rolls up the ocean sands stops not to ask where the last one stayed, and so will neither our age check its course, or guide it even by the tide-marks of a former. But, though we may not be guided by the experience of the past, we shall delight to read its lessons; and so will the future con ours, and hope in progress. Nor is the historian to destroy the artist. The charms of Art are but the adornment of the casket in which great truths should be contained. Artists should not, amber-like, gather their worth around straws.

3d. It is desirable as giving expression to the aspirations and sympathies of a nation; to social and political wrongs and errors, possessing a power of expression far beyond that of words. To this end its application must be pointed, and in terms of distinct national character.

More need not be said on its desirability, but it will be seen that it does not consist in the establishing of academies or of new rules and canons, nor in new systems of color or light and shade, but in the expression of new thoughts, of which these are but the characters of expression. These new thoughts must be the perceptive of the distinctive features of the natural character; of those traits in which we differ from any or all other nations, yet not neglecting those which we hold in common with the age or mankind; in the delineation of the modifications of class (not of artificial rank); in the fiery democratic impulses of the masses; the calmer elevation of the statesman; the purified feelings of domestic life; all the outbursts and aspirations, the energy and fiery enthusiasm which belong to the nation. These mark what our

school must be, and to the study and development of them the artist must give his heart and intellect, who would assist to form such school, or who would not be forgotten in future years. It will readily be suggested that these conditions require the employment of such subject as will call out the traits alluded to, either by being direct statements of them, and thus exciting recognition, as the admirable piece of German character in the Düsseldorf gallery—the Harvesters returning home; or giving such subjects as will call them out, scenes from history, stimulating patriotism, &c. Thus it may be seen that painting of history is valuable, mainly for the opportunity it gives of expressing the national character under the circumstances chosen for delineation, or biographically, by giving the character of the great actors, as with Delaroche; and for expressing those facts belonging particularly to that time, which might be lost. And so history painting becomes more valuable as it dates nearer the actual time of the event, and according to the artists ability to enter into the spirit of that time.

If we study European schools we shall find the state of Art exactly expressing the moral and intellectual state of the nations. In France intellect and enthusiasm are not more remarkable than the strong sensual feeling, and an utter want of reverence for things human and divine. In their art we find great grasp of science corresponding to intellect—great power and energy, to enthusiasm—a high development of color often amounting to morbidness, to sensuality—an entire rejection of all rules, and often a defiant reaching after originality, to irreverence. In Germany we find the same cultivation of the intellectual powers with less enthusiasm—a more profound philosophical temperament with an unhealthy, because forced, imagination, and a different expression of irreverence manifesting itself in rationalism, and, in the Christian sects in a determined rejection of all revelation which does not accord with or cannot be explained by their own knowledge and reasoning ability; a want of faith and sympathy with the nobler divine truths. Accordingly we find, as in France, a knowledge of the principles of Art—a deep sentiment; fancy rather than imagination manifesting itself in extravagant vagaries, and a modification of the canons of old Art similar to that of religious doctrine; and in their landscape, corresponding to faithlessness and blindness to divine truth, though we find perfect realization of the lower truths of nature and actuality, they show no perception of the great landscape notions of light, space, and ideal color. In the English character is exhibited neither the profound erudition, the enthusiastic temperament, or the highly refined sensuous organization of the Gaul, or the meditative philosophy of the Teuton, but better than all, a strong reverence for truth and authority, preserving the nation from skepticism and anarchy; a deep religious feeling preserving its vitality, and giving a peculiar value to talent when it does appear. As would be expected there is in English Art feeble grasp of principles; a want of general susceptibility to color or sentiment; but a reverential regard for all authority, manifesting itself injuriously where that of Raphael and Rubens is placed before that of nature, but when acting freely on genuine talent, elevating it to very noble and perfect results.

The most important of the influences acting injuriously on nationality are, 1st. The habitual regarding with too great esteem the superficial qualities of art—execution, "style," and color—and the scientific, light and shade, arrangement, &c., admirable acquirements, and necessary to the perfection of a school, but equally destructive when thought and moral qualities are sacrificed to them. Execution is the result of study; let the artist think clearly and his execution will be bold; without thought it is the writing-master's flourish; and so breadth of mass, of light and shade, are desirable, because they indicate a systematic method of thinking. Let the inner qualities be first attained and the external expression of them will follow. In order to this artists should educate themselves thoroughly. It is a most mistaken and fatal notion that a literary education is thrown away upon an artist, and there are many of our young artists who entertain it. The training of thought is ever the same, it is only subsequent direction of it that differs. 2d. Foreign study and the following of foreign masters. We should think it strange if one should go to France or Germany to learn to speak English, and yet we go there to learn to think American, how to look at American nature, and study the characteristics of the American people! Was there ever such madness? Our artists spend abroad their most valuable and impressible years, when they should be storing their memories with home thought, and founding a home feeling, and come back with sympathies, unnatural or entirely broken down by conflicting influences, and wonder at the appreciation of Art. No foreign master can enter into our peculiarities, and cannot, therefore, teach us how to study, which is all a master can do at the best. It is the same in landscape, and no better proof of this is needed than the rendering of American subjects by foreign landscape painters in the galleries every year. They may be, as in the "Trenton Falls," true to locality, and yet be entirely un-American. Thus the wonder of the ignorant of art that a self-taught artist should display great talent, should be reversed, and should be, that the *travelled* artist ever makes any thing. 3d. The study of the old masters, which is worse than the study of foreign masters, because it defies the spirit of the age, and it is still oftener ruinous. It may be well to see what the artists of other countries and ages have done, but let it be as they would walk through a gallery, and then return to their own studios and to nature. When the early schools of Italy began their labors, it was under the impulse of a feeling calling for the expression of the great motives of the Christian religion; its faith, its hopes, the acts and sufferings of its Founder and his disciples. This feeling was the result of the strong love they bore to that faith, and the earnest desire to be reminded constantly of its offices and promises. When this feeling found more ready response in the reproduction, through printing, of the Bible, artists motiveless wandered back to Greece and the Pagan age, as we do now, in admiration of certain qualities of old art, and then came the Renaissance and the fall. If the tuition of Raphael and Michael Angelo made only mannerists and imitators, what do we expect from the tuition of their works? Do our artists expect to find the elixir of life in the tombs, or do they think that the

shell that could not keep the life in its own spirit will do better by ours? There is no necessity to go back, we have every thing in this, our day, necessary for its art. Let us express the present in its own terms.

4th. The deference to false ideals, classicism, or any other ism except naturalism. After what has been said little remains on this, but we may point to examples of wreck on this rock as warnings. David, Vernet (the marine painter), Barry, and, in fact, almost all the early artists of the French and English schools, historical and landscape; Canova, and most of the modern sculptors who have been under his influence. A worse consequence of this false standard than the spoiling of weak artists, is, that it diseases the public taste, so that it cannot perceive the truth in the few who are strong enough to resist its tendency, and so kills by neglect those whom it fails to corrupt; and thus, both are the noblest artists, deprived of sympathy, and the public lose all benefit from their labors.

The artists themselves should resist all extraneous authority, save as it enables them to see new truths in nature. By a habitual reference to this standard of every thing they do, they must, and will, attain to greatness, and an abiding influence on the future progress of art, however humble their talent may be, while the idealists, however vigorous, will be forgotten.

We have already alluded to the influence of home study in connection with the injurious influences, but it cannot be too strongly impressed on the artists, that by home study, and by that only, can a great nationality be attained; and the more earnest and faithful that study is, the more readily and rapidly will the desired aid be reached. The landscape painter who wishes to express the character of American scenery should follow every form of crag, of hill and tree, with the faithfulness of one who copies the writing of some unknown language in fear lest some important point should be omitted. When he has perfect command of the smallest minutiae he may dash out what he pleases; paint as broadly, as artistically as he may, and use what license he will, his landscape will be unmistakable American—the characteristics will be indelibly stamped on his mind. There is much in the influence of early association. The mellowed light of memory falls in softening, touching beauty on the scenes of our native valleys. Other lands may greet the artist's eyes, but he will remember none with the intensity of delight with which he dwells on that which is linked with his boyhood's frolic days—this power extends far into the artist's manhood, and should we not beware how we weaken it by too early wanderings?

That the artist shall follow, as far as his individual feeling will permit, such classes of subjects as appeal most strongly to the national feeling, is a truism almost always overlooked. Thus we find Vanderlyn painting Marius on the ruins of Carthage, when, with the same feeling and power, he might have painted a Washington in his reverses, and thus rendered vital a page in our history that would have borne the artist's name, and endeared him to the people, forever. The fact that third-rate painters have been so eager to seize such subjects, deters many of the better ones from taking them—they seek to establish an aristocracy of art, forgetting that it is by its very nature democratic. The success of

these third-raters, owing entirely to their choice of subjects, should have taught them the power of the popular theme. They seek to violate one of their strongest instincts, because the people and the poor artists recognize and follow it. He who seeks immortality in this day, without enlisting the intelligent masses, reckons without his host. Our artists, our statesmen, our heroes, come from them, and the predilections with which they come out from the people remain with them. It is necessary therefore that the more childlike, the simpler feelings of humanity should be enlisted, that through them it may become mature in thought and judgment, for the uneducated are children in one sense.

The duty of the public towards Art is to be discriminating in their patronage, seeking out those indications of talent that point in the direction of true national feeling, and resisting all encroachments of an influence foreign to it, especially condemning all following or leaning to foreign schools; giving all facilities to home study, and discouraging artists from going abroad until they have settled themselves in their nationality—till Americanism is indelibly stamped on their intellects and hearts. If we want representations of foreign scene or motive, let us get them from those who are better able to render them than an alien can be. It is the duty of the public to reward all earnest endeavor to enter into this nationality, whether successful or not, as deserving credit by the very attempt, and as positively to frown down all displays of mere superficiality, of cleverness and technical skill. Let artists be taught their works are valuable, not in proportion to their ambition, but their earnestness; not for qualities of the hand, so much as the heart. There are springing up hundreds of young artists around us, and on the bent they now receive will depend mainly their future success, and what are we, as a nation, doing to insure it? We truly boast of being one of the greatest and wealthiest nations of the earth, and yet we have not one national gallery, or institution of art, except the Art-Union, not the slightest facilities are given by our government to the art student.

We can hardly leave this subject without alluding to those of our artists who have aimed at the great quality of which we have been speaking. Mount is the only one of our figure painters who has thoroughly succeeded in delineating American life, and his pictures, for that quality alone, are invaluable. Bingham has made some good studies of western character, but so entirely undisciplined and yet mannered, and often mean in subject, and showing such want of earnestness in the repetitions of the same faces, that they are hardly entitled to rank. Generally the artists seem to be possessed of a fever for high art, which in most cases is high nonsense. Why will Rothermel, with all his feeling, give us nothing but foreign subjects? or Page, with his magnificent power, ruin all his pictures by going back to subjects with which neither he nor his age have any sympathy? In landscape we are much better, as we ought to be. Durand appreciates and renders certain motives of American scenery, beautifully. So to a certain extent did Doughty once, but by his gross mannerisms and superficiality he has almost destroyed all power. Cole generally painted a medley, destitute of individual, local character; such as might be expected from a man who

spent his best years abroad. His early pictures gave promise of strong nationality, destroyed in his later idealisms, but returning again in his last few years, and best shown in such pictures as the Mountain Ford and the view from Mt. Holyoke. He who studies thoughtfully our national character, can hardly fail to convince himself that the material for a mighty school of art exists here, and of which no obstacle but a false public sentiment can prevent the development.

W.

THE ART OF LANDSCAPE PAINTING IN WATER COLORS.

CONCLUDED.

PART III.

ON THE METHOD OF WORKING A LANDSCAPE.

1.—ON LANDSCAPE OUTLINE.

The paper having been properly strained upon a drawing board, and being quite dry, the outline of the proposed drawing should be carefully made. This is a preliminary so important and indispensable that we will dwell somewhat minutely upon it.

However tedious this preparation of the outline may appear, it eventually saves time; and, leading to ultimate excellence, it enables the student to complete his picture with greater facility and power.

An accurate outline saves an infinity of trouble, by securing the hand against errors in the progress of the work; it insures confidence in the use of the brush when charged; and the most valuable result of the confidence thus communicated is, that the tints are left clean and bright.

The outline should be sketched at first slightly, but so far carefully as to leave no appearance of vagueness or indecision. The lines may afterwards be strengthened, where necessary, by a more decisive and vigorous touch; but if, in the first efforts to copy an object, the proportions be not correct, it is better to rub out the whole, than to tint upon a multiplicity of lines, which do but indicate weakness and cause confusion.

Draw, then, with a fine but faithful and firm line, the remote distance, making the lines stronger in touch as they approach the foreground. The foreground itself should be laid in with something of spirit and decision; and you thus define, even at the outset of your work, the different degrees of distance intended. No shading, however, with the lead pencil must be attempted in any stage of drawing the outline.

If mountains constitute the utmost distance, the lines upon their edges should be extremely faint, though at the same time sufficiently definite; for a careless outline may involve you in difficulties which may ultimately cause you to abandon your work in disgust.

After the mountains have received their first tints of color, so as to define their forms, be careful to efface the pencil outline with India-rubber or with bread, the color being perfectly dry. The result of this will be a charming aerial effect, and the removal of any hardness on the edge of the wash.

In tracing distant objects, delineate their general forms only, without attempting detail; as, for example, sketching a mountain, it will be sufficient to give the extreme outline.

In the outline of the foreground, however, greater minuteness must be observed; and the objects which usually constitute this portion of the picture—such as plants, figures, the bark of trees, and the like—should be carefully drawn from correct studies made from nature.

In drawing the outlines of trees, their stems and branches, as far as they are visible, should be carefully made out. The foliage requires only a slight indication of form; it should be described rather by a series of short lines or dots, than by any thing approaching to careful manipula-